

Wenatchee Area Designated a Substance Abuse Prevention Site

The Greater Wenatchee Area has been selected to receive support to focus on keeping youth, young adults and others free of alcohol and other drug misuse, while creating a healthier community. The support, which includes some funding for training, technical assistance and community-school prevention programs, is from the state Department of Social and Health Service's Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR). Chelan-Douglas Together for Drug Free Youth is the local contractor, in partnership with North Central Educational Service District for the school-based program.

Services will begin July 1st, 2011. Community members are invited to participate in planning and implementing program. The *Wenatchee Coalition against Substance Abuse*, hosted by Chelan-Douglas Together for Drug Free Youth, meets the second Tuesday of each month at Orchard Middle School. Those who would like to participate may contact Together at (509) 662-7201 for detailed information.

The Greater Wenatchee Area is one of 19 communities statewide funded by DBHR's Prevention Redesign Initiative (PRI) to develop new coalitions or support existing ones. DBHR is supporting this initiative in order to focus community and school-based prevention resources in targeted communities across the state, increasing opportunities to see community-side changes to drug prevalence rates and associated consequences.

"A number of factors were considered in selecting the Greater Wenatchee Area for services," said Renée Hunter, Executive Director of Together for Drug Free Youth. "These included the high poverty rate, as well as higher-than-state-average rates for underage alcohol use. We have made some initial progress on underage drinking, and are finding a good level of community readiness to benefit from these services."

The Coalition consists of parents/grandparents, youth, health professionals, educators, law enforcement, faith leaders, civic groups, business, media, and substance abuse prevention and treatment organizations. Working together, they will identify the highest prevention needs, plan and implement evidence-based strategies, leverage local resources and evaluate the impact of selected programs.

"Our goal in redesigning and targeting our state prevention services is to leverage enough resources in the highest-need communities to achieve greater reductions in substance abuse and the harm it causes", said David Dickinson, DBHR's Director. "Community leaders are prepared to use these resources to help more young people succeed, and to improve the health and safety of their community" added Dickinson.

PRI communities will focus on reducing underage drinking among 8th and 10th graders, improving academic performance, and reducing juvenile crime. DBHR will expand PRI in the next three years to approximately 50 high need communities in Washington State.

State and county data from the 2010 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey was released in March and is available online at www.hys.wa.gov. Tips for parents for preventing underage drinking can be found at www.StartTalkingNow.org. To get involved with Together's Wenatchee Coalition, contact Together at (509) 662-7201.